UNITED NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.17/1993/2
19 February 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Organizational session
24-26 February 1993
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

OUTLINE OF A MULTI-YEAR THEMATIC PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE COMMISSION

Report of the Secretary-General

CONTENTS

	Paragraphs	Page
INTRODUCTION	1	2
I. FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMISSION	2 - 5	2
II. PROGRAMME OF WORK	6 - 11	4
III. OTHER POSSIBLE CONSIDERATIONS	12	6
IV. CONCLUSIONS	13	7
Annex. SUGGESTED AGENDA 21 CLUSTERS		8

* E/CN.17/1993/1.

93-09609 (E) 230293

230293

/...

INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 12 of its resolution 47/191 on institutional arrangements to follow up the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, recommended that the Commission on Sustainable Development, at its first substantive session, adopt a multi-year thematic programme of its work that would provide a framework to assess progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 1/ and ensure an integrated approach to all of its environment and development components as well as linkages between sectoral and cross-sectoral issues; that programme could be of clusters that would integrate in an effective manner related sectoral and cross-sectoral components of Agenda 21 in such a way as to allow the Commission to review the progress of the implementation of the entire Agenda 21 by 1997. That programme of work could be adjusted, as the need arose, at subsequent sessions of the Commission.

I. FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMISSION

2. The General Assembly, in paragraph 3 of its resolution 47/191, recommended that the Commission have the following functions, as agreed in paragraphs 38.13, 33.13 and 33.21 of Agenda 21:

(a) To monitor progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and activities related to the integration of environmental and developmental goals throughout the United Nations system through analysis and evaluation of reports from all relevant organs, organizations, programmes and institutions of the United Nations system dealing with various issues of environment and development, including those related to finance;

(b) To consider information provided by Governments, including, for example, in the form of periodic communications or national reports regarding the activities they undertook to implement Agenda 21, the problems they faced, such as problems related to financial resources and technology transfer, and other environment and development issues they found relevant;

(c) To review the progress in the implementation of the commitments set forth in Agenda 21, including those related to the provision of financial resources and transfer of technology;

(d) To review and monitor regularly progress towards the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries for official development assistance; that review process should systematically combine the monitoring of the implementation of Agenda 21 with the review of financial resources available;

(e) To review on a regular basis the adequacy of funding and mechanisms, including efforts to reach the objectives agreed in chapter 33 of Agenda 21, including targets where applicable;

(f) To receive and analyse relevant input from competent non-governmental organizations, including the scientific and the private sector, in the context of the overall implementation of Agenda 21;

(g) To enhance the dialogue, within the framework of the United Nations, with non-governmental organizations and the independent sector, as well as other entities outside the United Nations system;

(h) To consider, where appropriate, information regarding the progress made in the implementation of environmental conventions, which could be made available by the relevant conferences of parties;

(i) To provide appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on the basis of an integrated consideration of the reports and issues related to the implementation of Agenda 21;

(j) To consider, at an appropriate time, the results of the review to be conducted expeditiously by the Secretary-General of all recommendations of the Conference for capacity-building programmes, information networks, task forces and other mechanisms to support the integration of environment and development at regional and subregional levels.

3. The General Assembly, in paragraph 4 of its resolution 47/191, also recommended that the Commission should:

(a) Promote the incorporation of the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 2/ in the implementation of Agenda 21;

(b) Promote the incorporation of the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests 3/ in the implementation of Agenda 21, in particular in the context of the review of the implementation of chapter 11 thereof;

(c) Keep under review the implementation of Agenda 21, recognizing that it was a dynamic programme that could evolve over time, taking into account the agreement to review Agenda 21 in 1997, and make recommendations, as appropriate, on the need for new cooperative arrangements related to sustainable development to the Economic and Social Council, and through it, to the General Assembly.

4. The General Assembly, in paragraph 5 of the same resolution, decided that the Commission, in the fulfilment of its functions, would also:

(a) Monitor progress in promoting, facilitating and financing, as appropriate, access to and transfer of environmentally sound technologies and corresponding know-how, in particular to developing countries, on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed, taking into account the need to protect intellectual property rights as well as the special needs of developing countries for the implementation of Agenda 21;

(b) Consider issues related to the provision of financial resources from all available funding sources and mechanisms, as contained in paragraphs 33.13 to 33.16 of Agenda 21.

5. Moreover, the General Assembly, in paragraph 14 of resolution 47/191, recommended that in order to carry out its functions and implement its programme of work effectively the Commission consider organizing its work on the following lines:

(a) Financial resources, mechanisms, transfer of technology, capacity-building and other cross-sectoral issues;

(b) Review of the implementation of Agenda 21 at the international level, as well as at the regional and national levels, including the means of implementation, in accordance with paragraph 12 of the same resolution and the functions of the Commission, taking into account, where appropriate, information regarding progress in the implementation of relevant environmental conventions;

(c) A high-level meeting, with ministerial participation, to have an integrated overview of the implementation of Agenda 21, to consider emerging policy issues and to provide necessary political impetus to the implementation of the decisions of the Conference and the commitments contained therein.

II. PROGRAMME OF WORK

6. The General Assembly, in paragraph 13 of the same resolution, requested the Secretary-General to submit his proposals for such a programme of work during the organizational session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The purpose of the present report is to propose a possible outline for such a programme.

7. The Commission, at its organizational session, will wish to consider very carefully the clusters that should be adopted both to provide the framework for, and to guide the process of the programme of work. The clusters suggested in the annex to this report, which draw primarily upon the structure of Agenda 21 itself, are further developed to respond to the specific requirements of General Assembly resolution 47/191. These proposals are intended neither to be prescriptive nor to limit possible options: Their main purpose at this stage is to stimulate ideas so as to enable the programme to be shaped as precisely as possible according to the wishes of the Commission. They are also intended to serve as a vehicle for enabling a rational, systematic and coherent approach to assessing in measurable terms progress made since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. Moreover, these proposals have been designed to facilitate the putting forth of recommendations, especially upon urgent and emerging major issues, to be addressed in the course of the high-level meeting of the Commission, with particular reference to the need for the Commission to be able to focus as clearly as possible upon its priorities and the strategic direction of its future work.

8. The annex groups the chapters of Agenda 21 into nine broad clusters. Each cluster refers to a set of interconnected chapters that could be advantageously reviewed together. The titles of the clusters and the numbers of the chapters referred to in each are given below:

1. Critical elements of sustainability (chapters 2-5)

2. Financial resources and mechanisms (chapter 33)

3. Education, science and technology (chapters 16, and 34-36)

4. Decision-making structures (chapters 8, and 37-40)

5. Roles of major groups (chapters 23-32)

6. Health and human settlements (chapters 6, 7 and 21)

7. Land, forests and biodiversity (chapters 10-15)

8. Atmosphere, oceans and freshwater (chapters 9, 17 and 18)

9. Toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes (chapters 19, 20 and 22)

9. The first five clusters are broadly cross-sectoral in nature and could be reviewed annually under part (a) of the structure suggested in paragraph 5 (a) above. The last four are broadly sectoral in nature and could be covered in three years: cluster 6 in one year, cluster 7 in another and clusters 8 and 9 together in a third. The time sequencing of consideration of these clusters is a matter that the Commission must decide, taking into account the timing of related events like:

(a) Negotiating processes for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, and for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

(b) Follow-up conferences to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, notably the first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in April 1994 and the United Nations conference on straddling and migratory fish stocks in July 1993;

(c) Major United Nations conferences scheduled for this period, notably the International Conference on Population and Development in September 1994, the World Summit for Social Development in early 1995 and the Fourth World Conference on Women in September 1995.

10. Given the constraints of time and the need to consider the multi-year thematic programme of work at the first substantive session of the Commission in 1993, it is suggested that the first comprehensive review be scheduled for 1994. With a three-year schedule for the sectoral clusters, all areas could be covered by 1996. The 1997 session of the Commission could be used for an overall review in order to prepare for the proposed special session of the General Assembly in that year.

11. The thematic reviews of Agenda 21 would have to draw on a variety of sources of information, including:

(a) Studies and reports on related themes prepared for various United Nations intergovernmental bodies;

(b) Information provided by Governments, for example, national reports and periodic communications;

(c) Other information in the public domain in national and international sources.

III. OTHER POSSIBLE CONSIDERATIONS

12. In determining the likely shape, size and content of the multi-year thematic programme of work, the Commission at its organizational session might wish to give consideration to a number of additional matters, such as:

(a) How a continuous and meaningful assessment of progress towards sustainable development might most effectively be made by the Commission. One possibility might be to develop realistic, usable and understandable indicators of progress based on a steady supply of accurate and comparable data towards such goals as the provision of opportunities to enable people everywhere to earn a sustainable livelihood, the provision of cleaner and less-polluted air, and the provision of safe and reliable supplies of fresh drinking-water;

(b) How the review by the Commission should be seen as an occasion for a major stocktaking rather than for a duplication of the detailed programmatic reviews that may take place in other forums like the governing bodies of the implementing agencies, and how that review could generate new ideas, especially given the recognition, in paragraph 4 (c) of General Assembly resolution 47/191, of Agenda 21 as a dynamic programme that could evolve over time, taking into account the agreement to review Agenda 21 in 1997;

(c) How the integrated nature of environment and development and the cross-linkages between sectoral and cross-sectoral issues can best be reflected in the review process;

(d) Whether there might be a need for a process (and if so what kind) to distil data and pre-evaluate progress so as to enable the Commission at its substantive session to focus its energies as clearly as possible upon the key issues requiring a policy dialogue;

(e) How the follow-up process embodied in the programme of work might best contribute to a meaningful partnership between all the key players concerned in the environment and development debate.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

13. The Commission, at its organizational session, is invited to consider the proposals for such grouping of Agenda 21 into thematic clusters as is set forth in the annex to the present report, to indicate a time schedule for the review of those thematic clusters, and to provide the necessary guidance to enable the proposals to be developed into a fully comprehensive document for consideration by the Commission at its first substantive session, to be held from 14 to 25 June 1993.

Notes

1/ See Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1).

2/ Ibid., resolution 1, annex I.

3/ Ibid., annex III.

Annex

SUGGESTED AGENDA 21 CLUSTERS

1. Critical elements of sustainability

   International cooperation to accelerate sustainable development in developing countries and related domestic policies (chapter 2)

   Combating poverty (chapter 3)

   Changing consumption patterns (chapter 4)

   Demographic dynamics and sustainability (chapter 5)

2. Financial resources and mechanisms

   Financial resources and mechanisms (chapter 33)

3. Education, science and technology

   Environmentally sound management of biotechnology (chapter 16)

   Transfer of environmentally sound technology, cooperation and capacity-building (chapter 34)

   Science for sustainable development (chapter 35)

   Promoting education, public awareness and training (chapter 36)

4. Decision-making structures

   Integrating environment and development in decision-making (chapter 8)

   National mechanisms and international cooperation for capacity-building in developing countries (chapter 37)

   International institutional arrangements (chapter 38)

   International legal instruments and mechanisms (chapter 39)

   Information for decision-making (chapter 40)

5. Roles of major groups

   Preamble to section III, on strengthening the role of major groups (chapter 23)

   Global action for women towards sustainable and equitable development (chapter 24)

Children and youth in sustainable development (chapter 25)

Recognizing and strengthening the role of indigenous people and their communities (chapter 26)

Strengthening the role of non-governmental organizations: partners for sustainable development (chapter 27)

Local authorities' initiatives in support of Agenda 21 (chapter 28)

Strengthening the role of workers and their trade unions (chapter 29)

Strengthening the role of business and industry (chapter 30)

Scientific and technological community (chapter 31)

Strengthening the role of farmers (chapter 32)

6. Health and human settlements

Protecting and promoting human health (chapter 6)

Promoting sustainable human settlement development (chapter 7)

Environmentally sound management of solid wastes and sewage-related issues (chapter 21)

7. Land, forests and biodiversity

Integrated approach to the planning and management of land resources (chapter 10)

Combating deforestation (chapter 11)

Managing fragile ecosystems: combating desertification and drought (chapter 12)

Managing fragile ecosystems: sustainable mountain development (chapter 13)

Promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development (chapter 14)

Conservation of biological diversity (chapter 15)

8. Atmosphere, oceans and freshwater

Protection of the atmosphere (chapter 9)

Protection of the oceans, all kinds of seas, including enclosed and semi-enclosed seas, and coastal areas and their protection, rational use and development of their living resources (chapter 17)

Protection of the quality and supply of freshwater resources, application of integrated approaches to the development, management and use of water resources (chapter 18)

9. Toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes

Environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals, including prevention of illegal international traffic in toxic and dangerous products (chapter 19)

Environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes, including prevention of illegal international traffic in hazardous wastes (chapter 20)

Safe and environmentally sound management of radioactive wastes (chapter 22)